

PEPPER, CALIFORNIA WONDER

Capsicum annuum

One of the best large Bell peppers! The crisp, thick flesh has a mild, pleasant flavor. Perfect for salads, stuffing and as a soup ingredient. High in vitamins A and C.

Start seed indoors 8 weeks before planting outdoors. Transplant when 3 inches tall. Or, sow directly in garden in sunny location after frost danger is past. Thin to 1 plant every 18 inches when 3 inches tall. Use a balance fertilizer to increase production.

Planting:

Peppers require a long, warm growing season. Seed should be started indoors in March or 8 weeks prior to transplanting. To start seed indoors, sow 2-3 seeds ¼" deep, into 1x1" cells and provide constant moisture and a soil temperature of 26-29°C (80-85°F). After germination (1-2 weeks), thin seedlings to one per cell. Once seedlings develop 2-3 true leaves, transplant into larger containers, 2x2" or 3x3". At transplanting time, set transplants 18" apart in rows 30" apart.

Growing:

Sheltered, full sun area with a soil pH of 6.0-6.8. Peppers are moderate feeders and require plenty of compost and well rotted manure mixed into the soil prior to planting. Fertilize sparingly until plants start to set fruit. Too much nitrogen causes an excess of foliage and dropping of flower buds. Provide even moisture, particularly during flowering and fruit set. Use black plastic or [paper mulch](#) to attract heat, hold water and prevent weeds.

Harvest:

Begin harvest when peppers reach a useable size. Cut rather than pull from branch.

Problems:

Blossoms will drop when temperature falls below 60°F (15°C) or goes above 80°F (27°C).

Blossom End Rot Fruits blacken and decay at the blossom end due to a calcium deficiency.

Poor Fruit Set usually due to cold weather. Excessive nitrogen fertilizer during early growth may also delay fruit set.

Pests & Disease:

Aphids small pear-shaped soft-bodied insects, green, red or black in colour. Aphids feed by sucking plant sap which causes curled, stunted leaves and shoots and reduces plant vigour. Spray plants with an [insecticidal soap](#).

Companions:

Carrot, onion, parsnip, pea, basil.